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ABSTRACT

One of the central problems in the study of fictional prose is that of distinguishing between mere linguistic regularity, which in itself is of no interest to literary studies, and regularity which is significant for the text in which it is found. General criteria for determining whether any particular instance of linguistic prominence is likely to be stylistically relevant or not are lacking. In "Mrs. Dalloway" the features that are noteworthy are largely syntactic, and are in the realm of syntactic imagery, where the syntax "serves a vision of things." Since there are innumerable kinds of deviances, the ones selected by the author spring from particular semantic impulses, particular ways of looking at experience. The vision provides the motivation for their prominence: it makes them relevant, however ordinary they may be. The style of "Mrs. Dalloway" rests very much on foregrounding of this kind. Stylistics can help teachers of English to achieve in literature classes useful insights that they could not achieve without them. But they should be aware of stylistic principles and procedures and know how to apply them to a literary text in an eclectic manner. (Eleven references are attached.) (RAE)

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Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway -

A Suggested Experiment in Classroom Stylistics

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I

My main concern in this paper is with the use of language in literature. This, it seems to me, is one of the central problems in the study of fictional prose. I mean the problem of distinguishing between mere linguistic regularity, which in itself is of no interest to literary studies, and regularity which is significant for the text in which we find it. However, we lack general criteria for determining whether any particular instance of linguistic prominence is likely to be stylistically relevant or not.

Language serves for the expression of content; it has an 'ideational' function. It is through this function that the writer embodies in language his experience of the phenomena of the real world and this includes his experience of the internal world of his own consciousness: his reactions, cognitions, and perceptions, and also his linguistic acts of speaking and understanding. In serving this function, language lends structure to his experience and helps to determine his way of looking at things. It is through the textual function that language makes links with itself and with the situation and discourse becomes possible. A text is an optional unit of language and it includes as a special instance a literary text. It is a functional semantic concept and is not defined by size. It is concerned with both the internal organization of the sentence and its meaning as a message both in itself and in relation to the context.

We are sensitive to the relative frequency of different grammatical and lexical patterns, which is an aspect of 'semantic potential', and our expectancies, as readers, are in part based on our awareness of the probabilities inherent in the language. My concern here is not with psychological problems of the response to literature but with the linguistic options selected by the writer and their relation to the total meaning of the work.

When I re-examined the novel Mrs Dalloway of Virginia Woolf I had first studied some four years ago, there seemed to be much that was of interest in its own right. In Mrs Dalloway the features that come to our attention are largely syntactic, and we are in the realm of syntactic imagery, where the syntax 'serves a vision of things'. Since there are innumerable kinds of deviances, we should expect that the ones selected by the author spring from particular semantic impulses, particular ways of looking at experience.

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The vision provides the motivation for their prominence; it makes them relevant, however ordinary they may be. The style of MrsD rests very much on foregrounding of this kind.

II

Widdowson defines 'stylistics' as 'the study of literary discourse from a linguistics orientation and that ' it is an area of mediation between literary criticism and linguistics.' In the following pages I am going to deal with MrsD as 'text' and as 'discourse' at the same time. Literature as text is the description of the linguistic elements that occur in a piece of literary writing. It is an account of how it exemplifies the system of the language used in a some what different way. For example, in MrsD we come across several sentences such as

London has swallowed up many millions of young men called Smith (p.94)

The car had gone, but it had left a slight ripple which flowed through glove shops and hat shops.. (20-21)

A breeze flaunting ever so warmly down the Mall through the thin trees, past the bronze heroes.. (23)

Down, down he sank into the plumes and feathers of sleep, sank, and was muffled over (63)

The kind of deviance we notice in these sentences in the expressions underlined arises from a violation of selection restriction or collocation rules and is extremely common in literature. The question is how does the textual analysis relate to the interpretation of a particular literary work as a piece of communication? In order to answer this question we will have to consider the relationship between the grammaticalness of text and the interpretability of discourse. In MrsD linguistic deviations such as

To dance, to ride, she had adored all that..(9)

But failure, one conceals.. (19)

Cold, heartless, a prude, he called her..(10)

Better anything, she was inclined to say..(14)

Year in year out she wore that coat; she perspired..(14)

do not occur randomly. They pattern in with other linguistic features, both regular and irregular to form a whole. They are understood, therefore, not in isolation with reference to the context in which only to the linguistic system or code, but also with reference to the context in which they appear. The underlined elements in the above examples are the instances of deliberate inversions or topicalization used to emphasize the meaning in the context.

An interpretation of a literary work as a piece of discourse involves correlating the meaning of a linguistic item as an element in the language code-'signification'-with the meaning it takes on in the context in which it occurs. For instance, in the examples given below the structures of meaning are created by simple juxtaposition:

Plumes and feathers of sleep..

a touch of a bird about her, of the jay, blue green,
light vivacious though she was over fifty and grown very
white since her illness..(6)

How many million times she had seen her face, and always
with the same imperceptible contraction! She pursed her lips
when she looked in the glass, It was to give her face point.
That was herself - pointed; dart-like; definite..(42)

The association of these lexical items in this context has the effect of activating those semantic features in their signification which have common point of reference. Such literary discourse is characterized by the creation of language patterns over and above those which are required by the linguistic code and these patterns bestow upon the linguistic items within them certain meanings which, when fused with the signification these items have as code elements, constitute their unique semantic value. While describing the character of Clarissa Virginia Woolf writes

She was like iron, like flint, rigid up the backbone..(72)
and makes the reader visualize Clarissa.

A pattern of structural equivalences can condition the lexical items in the structures concerned in such a way that they take on meanings other than those they have in the language code.

As a cloud crosses the sun, silence falls on London;
and falls on the mind. Effort ceases. Time flaps on the mast.
There we stop; there we stand. Rigid, the skeleton of habit
alone upholds the human frame. Where there is nothing,
Peter Walsh said to himself; feeling hollowed out, utterly
empty within. Clarissa refused me, he thought. He stood
there thinking, Clarissa refused me. (55)

The Bond Street fascinated her; Bond Street early in the
morning in the season; its flags flying; its shops; no
splash; no glitter; one roll of tweed in the shop where
her father had bought his suits for fifty years; a few
pearls; salmon on an iceblock..(13)

This late age of world's experience had bred in them all,
all men and women, a well of tears. Tears and sorrow;
courage and endurance; a perfectly upright and stoical
bearing..(12)

The recurrence of the progressive form 'stem+ing' runs as a motif through the linguistic patterning of the following passage:

For Heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it
so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it,
creating it every moment afresh...(6)

Virginia Woolf repeatedly uses dislocation and fragmentation and creates interior monologues of Clarissa which enables the reader to see the thought process of Clarissa's mind. The following extracts illustrate the point:

All the same, that one day should follow another; Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday; that one should wake up in the morning; see the sky, walk in the park; meet Hugh Whitbread; then suddenly in came Peter: then these roses; it was enough. After that, how unbelievable death was! - that it must end and no one in the whole world would know how she had loved it all; how, every instant...(135-36)

Bond Street fascinated her; Bond Street early in the morning in the season; its flags flying; its shops; no splash; no glitter; one roll of tweed in the shop where her father had bought his suits for fifty years; a few pearls; salmon on an iceblock...(13)

..They love life; in people's eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men suffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London.

But how strange, on entering the Park, the silence; the mist; the hum; the slow-swimming happy ducks; the pouched birds waddling; and who should be coming along with his back against the Government buildings, most appropriately, carrying a dispatch box stamped with the Royal Arms, who but Hugh Whitbread; her old friend Hugh - the admirable Hugh! (7-8)

VP + to infinitive + gerund construction as in the following sentence helps characterization to emerge with maximum economy of language.

But he begins to talk aloud, answering, people, arguing, laughing, crying, getting very excited and making her write things down.

This is elaborated by the following sentence which is an instance of syntactic inversion or topicalization further extended by the elliptical compliment as follows:

Perfect nonsense, it was; about death; about Miss Isabel Pole..she could stand it no longer...(75)

Physical movements of the characters in the novel often indicate their state of mind and are expressed in simple one-word NP + one-word VP forms as in the following example:

syntactic parallelism also

He had only to open his eyes; but a weight was on them; a fear. He strained; he pushed; he looked; he saw Regent's Park before him. Long streamers of sunlight fawned at his feet. The trees waved, brandished. We welcome, the world seemed to say; we accept; we create. Beauty, the world seemed to say.(77)

Virginia Woolf exploits the use of English Syntax in order to create her characters in several ways. In the following example we notice her repeated use of Intensifier+Adjective construction in 'elaboration:

But nobody could be like Septimus; so gentle; so serious; so clever...(79)

Left branching and right branching constructions in the novel are meaningful. It is evident that composition regularly involves choices of syntactic arrangement - fronting, transpositions, cleft constructions etc. One recurrent compositional choice determines the arrangement of subordinate or attributive elements round a central core; the positioning of modifiers before or after a phrase head, the patterning of adverbials round the subject-verb node of a clause, the placing of subordinate clauses in relationship to the principal clause. The latter in particular is often denoted by the conveniently figurative term 'branching' (Nash). In the construction of a complex sentence, subordinate clauses may be left-branching from the stem of the main clause, or make a right branch, or be left-and-right branching, or even cleave the stem with a so called mid-branch (Nash). The stylistic effect of left-branching is to make the reader wait for completed information. Elaborate left-branching presents stylistic problems, however. Even though script or print relieve the memory long left branches are still a psychological burden if they are not kept under close control.

Right-branching sentences track outwards from the stem, in a procedure that to reader and writer alike may seem more natural. Because it is more amenable to the habit of human thought than the left-branching arrangement. The left branch asks the reader in effect to store information, not so the right branch, which handles information cumulatively without imposing this burden of storage. Constructions of this type predominate in ⁱⁿ Mrs D. Given below are some examples illustrating the point:

+ He would be back from India one of these days, June or July, she forgot which, for his letters were awfully dull..

Her ladyship waited with the rugs about her knees an hour or more, leaning back, thinking sometimes of the patient sometimes, excusably, of the wall of gold, mounting minute by minute while she waited. (105)

It was precisely twelve o'clock; twelve by Big Ben; whose stroke was wafted over the northern part of London; blent with that of other clocks, mixed in a thin ethereal way with the clouds and wisps of smoke and died up there among the seagulls - twelve o'clock struck as Clarissa Dalloway laid her green dress on her bed, and the Warren Smiths walked down Harley Street. (104)

✓ And Clarissa had leant forward, taken his hand, drawn him to her, kissed him, - actually had felt his face on hers before she could down the brandishing of silver-flashing olumes like pampas grass in a tropic gale in her breast, which, subsiding, left her holding his hand, patting his knee, and feeling as she sat back extraordinarily at ease with him and light-hearted, all in a clap it came over her, if I had married him, this gaiety would have been mine all day!

The use of sound in the book goes beyond the occasional echoes that are found in many everyday sentences both by its density and

by its organization in relation to syntax and meaning:

Cross alliteration As cloud crosses the sun, silence falls on London; and falls on the mind. Effort ceases. Time flaps on the mast. There we stop; there we stand. Rigid, the skeleton of habit alone upholds the human frame. Where there is nothing, Peter Walsh said to himself; feeling hollowed out, utterly empty within. Clarissa refused me, he thought. He stood there thinking, Clarissa refused me. (55)

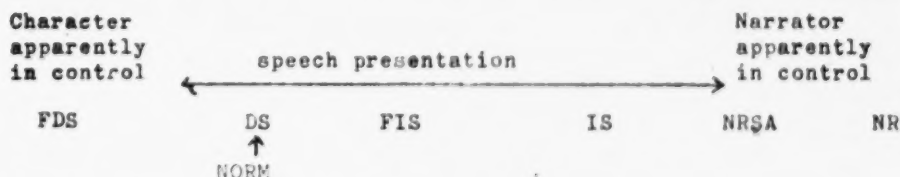
The impression of the shape of words, neutralized by their use in everyday speech and writing is re-activated by devices such as assonance and alliteration in the lines quoted above. The novel abounds in several such examples. The use of such devices lend force to semantic connections in the text.

III

Now let us consider the varieties of speech situations in MrsD. All the four situations IS (Indirect Speech), DS (Direct Speech), FDS (Free Direct Speech) and FIS (Free Indirect Speech) are normally exploited in literary prose (Short). These are modes of speech presentation. e.g.

He said that he liked it there in Calcutta (IS)
He said, 'I liked it here in calcutta' (DS)
I like it here in Calcutta (FDS)
He liked it there in Calcutta (FIS)

In FDS and DS we are told what the character said in the words that he used. In IS we are told what the character said, but in the narrator's words. FIS is a hybrid between the two. Moreover, as DS is the norm for the presentation of speech, the use of FIS is usually perceived by readers as indicating narratorial intervention. It is thus often used for distancing, irony, or both. The following scales devised by Widdowson can be applied to MrsD.



Free Indirect Thought in opposition to Free Indirect Speech is a movement from the norm towards the character end of the continuum, and it is perceived by readers as representing closeness with the character, the direct observation of the articulation of his thoughts.



It is for this reason that FIT is used in stream-of-consciousness novel like MRSD. It apparently allows us to observe a character's unconscious thoughts as they appear.

The exclamatory and interrogative forms see-saw the reader from a relatively free rendering to an indirect position from which to view what is said:

'But what are you going to do?' she asked him. Oh, the lawyers and solicitors, Messers Hooper and Grateley of Lincoln's Inn, they were going to do it he said. (52)

Peter has just told Clarissa that he is in love with a married woman and that he has come to London to see about the divorce. Clarissa is startled by the information, and she is accorded direct speech. Peter, on the other hand, is very off hand about the matter. His reply is distanced by its presentation in FIS and its unemotive tone is emphasized by the interpolation of the unnecessary information of the name of his solicitors. The effect is not one of irony. Instead, the contrast between the modes of speech presentation puts one, so to speak, in the shadow of the other, and so allows us to infer different characters' attitudes towards the information presented.

This shows how FIS can contrast with other speech modes in the author's control of the 'light and shade' of conversation, the highlighting and backgrounding of speech according to the role and attitude of characters. Woolf slips from narrative statement to interior portrayal without the reader noticing what has occurred, and as the reader has little choice but to take on trust the views of the narrator, when character and narrator are merged in this way he tends to take over the view of the character too. The unobtrusive change from one mode to another, sometimes called 'slipping' can occur more than once inside one sentence. For example

NRA And there the motor car stood, with drawn blinds,
FIT and upon them a curious pattern like a tree, Septimus
NASA thought, and this gradual drawing together of everything
NRA to one centre before his eyes, as if some horror had
FDT come almost to the surface and was about to burst into
FIT flames, terrified him. The world wavered and quivered
and threatened to burst into flames. It is I who am
blocking the way, he thought. (18)

Because the reported clause is fairly long, the effect of the reporting clause, when it comes, is quite unexpected. A consequence of this kind of change in thought presentation is that Septimus's thoughts suddenly appear to be much more conscious than we first assumed. After the main clause the sentence slips back into FIS again with the use of the 'near' deictic 'this'.

In the following example FDT^{FIT} and inversions are combined:

I know all that, Peter thought; I know what I'm up against, he thought, running his finger along the blade of his knife, Clarissa and Dalloway and all the rest of them; but I'll show Clarissa - and then to his utter surprise, suddenly thrown by those uncontrollable forces,

Thrown through the air, he burst into tears; wept; wept without the least shame, sitting on the sofa, the tears running down his cheeks (52)

This is used to indicate how in control of his thought Peter is. Because immediately after these deliberations his emotions take him over completely.

In MRS D thoughts are addressed to oneself or to the void it might seem, at first sight, that pragmatic analysis would not be able to aid significantly our understanding of the flow of character thought. Thoughts become a form of suspended action or occasionally a form of suspended interaction (Leech) between characters as in the following passage:

That girl, thought Mrs. Dempster (who saved crusts for the squirrels and often ate her lunch in Regent's Park), don't know a thing yet; and really it seemed to her better to be a little stout, a little clack, a little moderate in one's expectations. Percy drank. Well, better to have a son, thought Mrs Dempster. She had had a hard time of it, and couldn't help smiling at a girl like that. You'll get married, for you're pretty enough, thought Mrs. Dempster. Get married, she thought and then you'll know. Oh, the cooks, and so on. Every man has his ways. But whether I'd have chosen quite like that if I could have known, thought Mrs Dempster, and could not help wishing to whisper a word to Maisie Johnson; to feel on the creased pouch of her worn old face the kiss of pity. For it's been a hard life, thought Mrs Dempster. What hadn't she given to it? Roses; figure; her feet too. (she drew the knobbed lumps beneath her skirt).

Roses, she thought sardonically. All trash, m'dear. For really, what with eating, drinking, and mating, the bad days and good, life had been no mere matter of roses, and what was more, let me tell you, Carrie Dempster had no wish to change her lot with any woman's in Kentish Town! But, she implored, pity. Pity, for the loss of roses. Pity she asked of Maisie Johnson, standing by the Hyacinth beds. (31)

At a number of points that reflection takes the form of self-address. Woolf makes the thought process conversational. The strong emotional activity is juxtaposed with information about the physical world.

The following analysis consists of an examination of the way Woolf manipulates point of view and the presentation of character's - Peter's and Clarissa's thoughts in the passage. The characters and the narrator are merged and Woolf creates varying point of view, tone and distance of speech and thought presentation using different modes 'slipping' from one to another. FIT predominates as it allows us to observe a character's unconscious thought as they appear:

- DS → 1. 'And how are you?' said Peter Walsh, positively trembling; taking both her hands; kissing both her hands.
- FIT → 2. She's grown older, he thought, sitting down.
- FDT → 3. I shan't tell her anything about it, he thought, for she's grown older.
- FIT → 4. She's looking at me, he thought, a sudden embarrassment coming over him, though he had kissed her hands.
- NRA → 5. Putting his hand into his pocket, he took out a large pocket-knife and half opened the blade.

- FIT → 6. Exactly the same, thought Clarissa; the same queer look; the same check suit; a little out of the straight his face is, a little thinner, dryer, perhaps, but he looks awfully well, and just the same.
- DS → 7. 'How heavenly it is to see you again!! she exclaimed.
- NRA → 8. He had his knife out.
- FIT → 9. That's so like him, she thought.
- FIS → 10. He had only reached town last night, he said; would have to go down into the country at once; and how was everything,
FIT ↓
FDT → how was everybody - Richard? Elizabeth?
- DS → 11. 'And what's all this?' he said, tilting his pen-knife towards her green dress.
- FDT → 12. He's very well dressed, thought Clarissa; yet he always criticizes me.
- FIT → 13. Here she is mending her dress; mending her dress as usual,
FDT ↗ he thought; here she's been sitting all the time I've been in India; mending her dress; playing about; going to parties; running to the House and back and all that, he thought, growing more and more irritated, more and more agitated, for there's nothing in the world so bad for some women as marriage, he thought; and politics; and having a Conservative husband, like the admirable Richard.
- FIT → 14. So it is, so it is, he thought, shutting his knife with a snap.
- DS → 15. 'Richard's very well, Richard's at a Committee.' said Clarissa.
- FIS → 16. And she opened her scissors, and said, did he mind her just finishing what she was doing to her dress, for they had a party that night?
- DS → 17. 'Which I shan't ask you to' she said. 'My dear Peter!' she said.
- NRSA → 18. But it was delicious to hear her say that - my dear Peter! Indeed, it was all so delicious - the silver, the chairs; all so delicious!
- FIS → 19. Why would't she ask him to her party? he asked.
- FIT → 20. Now of course, thought Clarissa, he's enchanting! perfectly enchanting! Now I remember how impossible it was ever to make up my mind - and why did I make up my mind - not to marry him, she wondered, that awful summer?
- DS → 21. 'But it's so extraordinary that you should have come this morning!' she cried, putting her hands, one on top of another, down on her dress.
- DS → 22. 'Do you remember,' she said, 'how the blinds used to flap at Bourton'?
- DS → 23. 'They did,' he said; and he remembered breakfasting alone, very awkwardly, with her father; who had died; and he had not written to Clarissa.
- NRSA → 24. But he had never got on well with old Parry, that querulous, weak-kneed old man, Clarissa's father, Justin Parry.
- DS → 25. 'I often wish I'd got on better with your father,' he said.
- DS ↓ 26. 'But he never liked anyone who - our friends', said Clarissa;
NRSA → and could have bitten her tongue for thus reminding Peter that he had wanted to marry her.
- FDT ↓ 27. Of course I did, thought Peter; it almost broke my heart too,
FIT → he thought; and was overcome with his own grief, which rose like a moon looked at from a terrace, ghostly beautiful with light from the sunken day.

FDT→ 28. I was more unhappy than I've ever been since, he thought;

NRA→ 29. And as if in truth he were sitting there on the terrace he edged a little towards Clarissa; put his hand out; raised it; let it fall.

NRA→ 30. There above them it hung, that moon.

NRA→ 31. She too seemed to be sitting with him on the terrace, in the moonlight....

NRA→ 32. She looked at Peter Walsh; her look, passing through all that time and that emotion, reached him doubtfully; settled on him tearfully; and rose and fluttered away, as a bird touches a branch and rises and flutters away. Quite simply she wiped her eyes.

It will be seen from the above analysis that Woolf is fond of omitting the reporting clause and also fond of running speech and narrative together by omitting the inverted commas; Peter and Clarissa, in the above extract, are accorded DS to show how excited they are to meet after such a long time(sentences at S.Nos.1,7,11,15,17,21,22,23,25,26) Most of the remaining sentences are FDT, FIT type and the author makes the reader move in the stream of consciousness of both Clarissa and Peter. Woolf also uses NRA & NRSA which help us to under the characters more.

Finally let us consider the macrostructure of Mrs Dalloway.

Although Virginia Woolf broke sufficiently with traditional forms to eliminate classical chapters boundaries, she retained the principle of chapter division. This is clearly identifiable as increased spacing in the text. Accordingly, we can suggest the following chapter division of the text:

Chapter		Pages
1	-	5 - 33
2	-	33 - 54
3	-	54 - 63
4	-	63 - 72
5	-	72 - 104
6	-	104 - 140
7	-	140 - 167
8	-	167 - 182
9	-	182 - 206
10	-	206 - 215

The sequential segments in the novel are (a) Chapters 1 - 7 - 8 (b) 2 - 6 - 7 - 8 and (c) 3 - 7 - 9. Chapters 3 and 9 are synoptic and 4,5 and 10 are isolates.

Although Virginia Woolf broke sufficiently with obvious chapter division Chapter 7 plays a central role in the macrostructure of the novel.

It functions as common element in each of the sequential segments.

This seems to be entirely consistent with the subjective impressions of the novel. This chapter is considerably longer than all the other chapters. This possibly indicates its critical role in structuring the novel. In it the principal sub-plot which concerns Septimus Warren Smith, reaches its culmination in integrated with the main plot. Thus one of the major themes of the novel, the contrast between the vacuous lifestyle of MrsD and her set and the real tragedy of the fate of an apparently insignificant ex-soldier from the trenches of the first world war is achieved. The macrostructure of MrsD depends crucially upon the similarity of networks containing proper names and titles viz. MrsD.

The question uppermost in my mind while writing this paper was a frankly pragmatic and pedagogical one: can Stylistics help teachers of English to achieve in their 'literature classes' anything useful that they cannot achieve without it? The answer is 'yes' provided they are aware of stylistic principles and procedures and know how to apply them to a literary text as demonstrated in this paper in an eclectic manner though.

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